

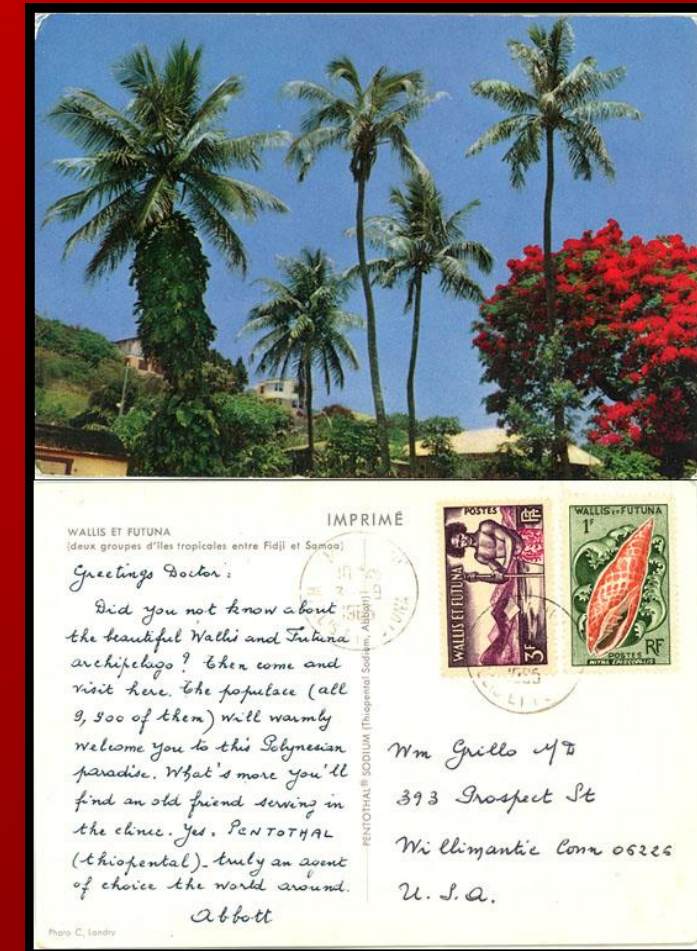


# Introduction to “Dear Doctor” Postcards: Junk Mail from Exotic Lands

*By Tom Fortunato, January, 2016  
for the Rochester Philatelic Association*



I'll bet you've seen postcards like this before and wondered about them. This presentation is meant as an introduction to this fascinating area of postal history. They're commonly known as “*Dear Doctor Cards*” based on their salutation.





In days before the Internet, email and spamming, mail was used as the primary form of cheap advertising by companies looking to sell their products and services.

Perhaps no other business exploited this marketing strategy more than the drug industry.







Postcards were the rage at the turn of the 20th century and drug manufacturers started sending out mailings to doctors touting the latest and greatest pharmaceutical medicines they made. Mailings sent from exotic lands proved to be especially eye-catching to the recipient for both the pictures found on one side and the stamp and message on the other.





One of the earliest of these mailings was sent in November and December 1898 by the New York City based drug firm E. Fougere & Company. Their postcards introduced Colchi-Sal capsules to doctors as a remedy for gout, rheumatism, and rheumatic arthritis. Its major ingredient- cannabis.







\* Int'l post card rate from Japan to the U.S.- 2 sen (1.0316 cents)

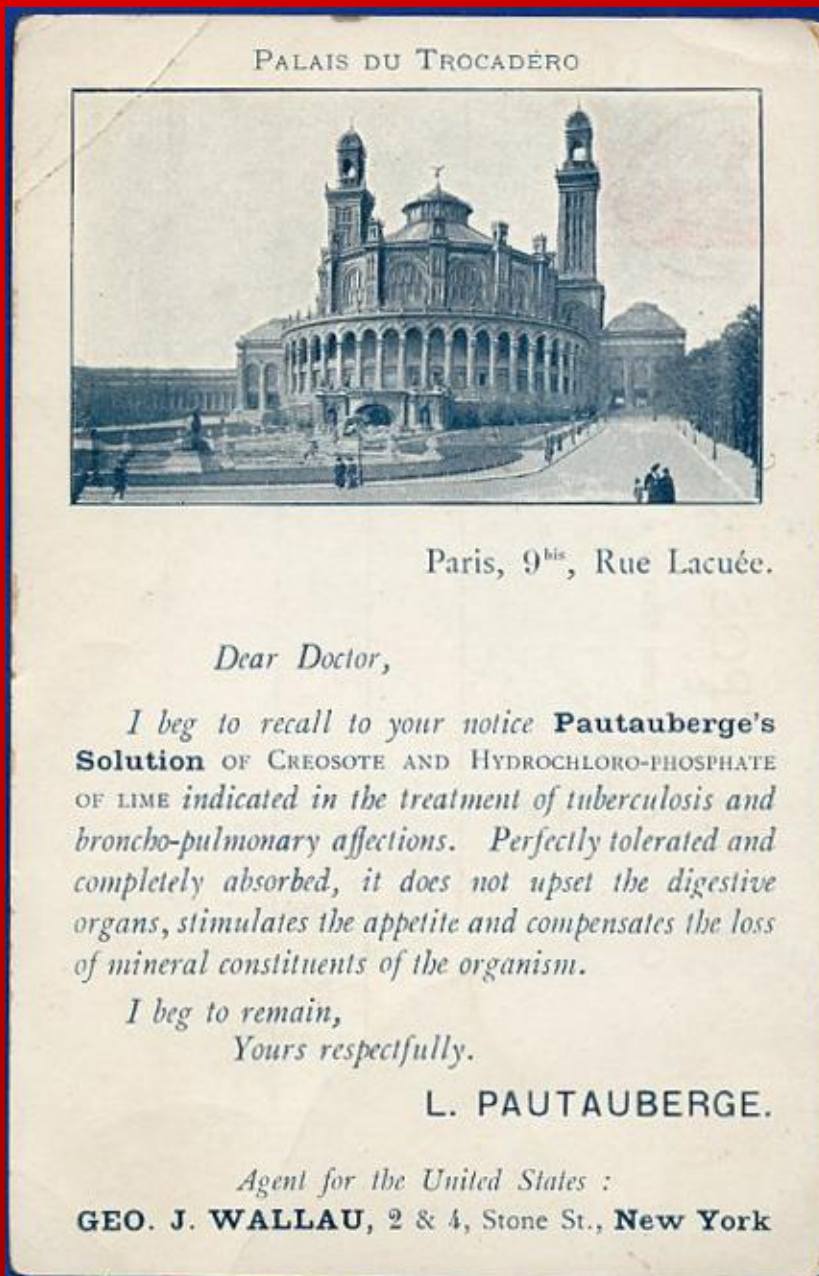
\* U.S. domestic postcard rate- 1¢

If the cost to print the messages on these cards was less expensive in Japan than the U.S., it would have been cheaper to mail these from Japan than within the U.S. itself!





Pautauberg's Solution was a well-prescribed treatment for tuberculosis for at least 20 years before this postcard was mailed in August 1904 from company headquarters in Paris to a doctor in Springfield, Massachusetts.



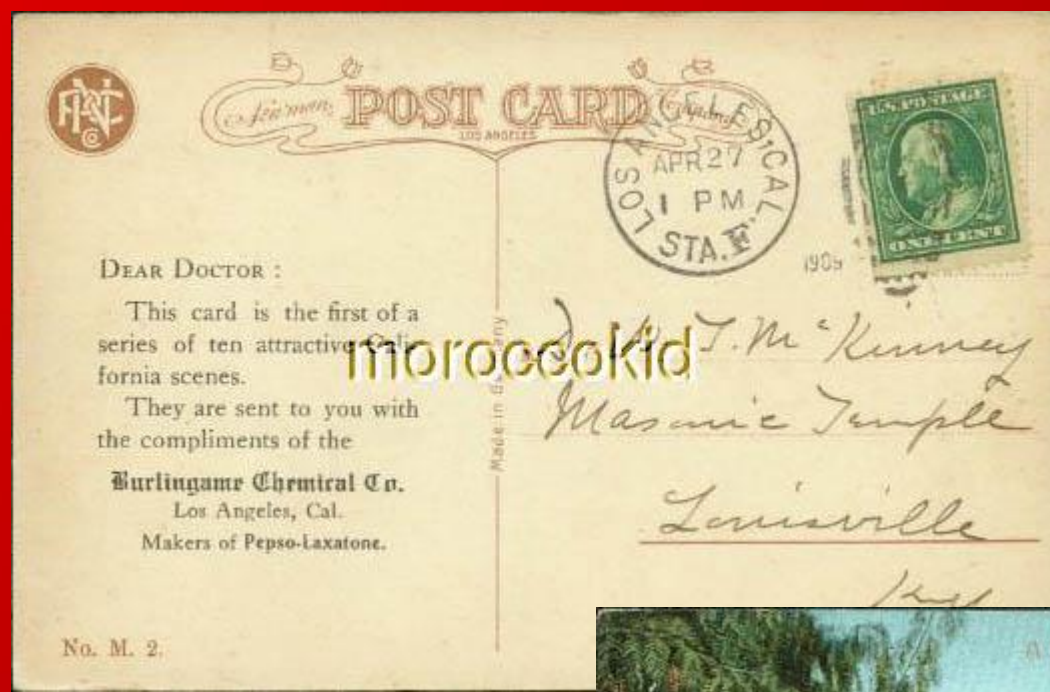
*First known use of the salutation "Dear Doctor."*







Not all cards were sent from overseas. Here is Card #1 mailed April 27, 1909 of a series of 10 cards sent by the Burlingame Chemical Company of Los Angeles advertising Pepso-Laxatone, a digestive laxative that contained 14% alcohol. The series depicted “attractive California scenes.”







Postmarked May 2, 1913 in Paris, this card was written in Spanish and sent to a doctor in Bolivia. It touts a drug called Ceribrine, for neurological pain by the French company Fournier. It is one of at least seven sent 1911-1916 depicting different French tourist sites sent to doctors in Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay.







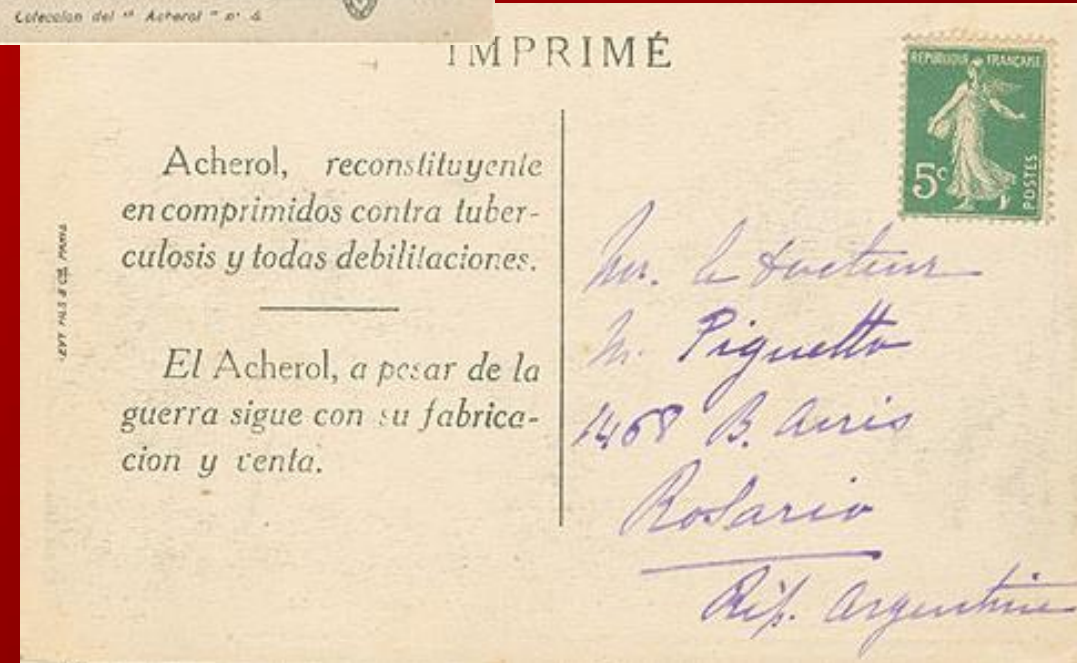
Mailed April 4, 1917 by  
Laboratories Ch. Couturieux  
in France to Rosario,  
Argentina, , this card  
advertises “Levurina extract”  
as a medication for skin  
infirmities of all kinds,  
including acne, eczema and  
herpes. Note the military  
themed image, as WWI was  
nearing an end.







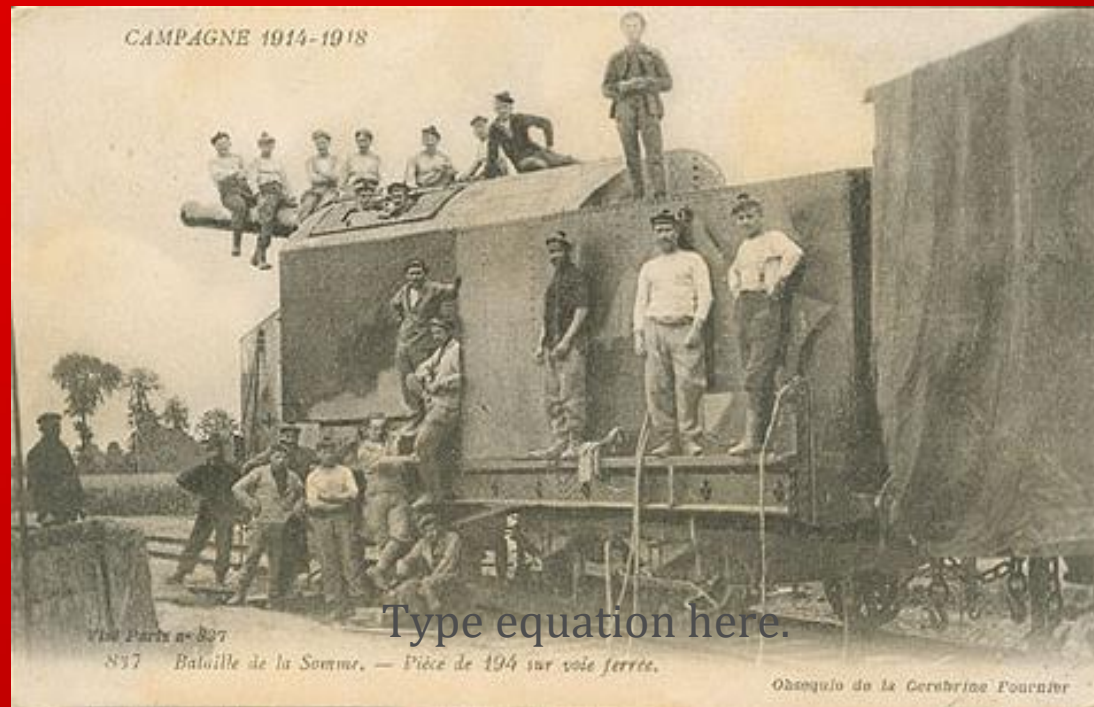
A different drug mailing, again to Argentina, also with a military theme-“The War 1914-1915” of men preparing trenches. An anti-tuberculosis drug, “Acherol, despite the war, is still being manufactured and sold.” By an unknown drug company.







Fournier is known to have sent a military series of cards. Here the Battle of The Somme is seen, a joint British and French offensive in 1916 against the Germans, marked by the first battle using tanks. Sent September 20, 1918. The company's Paris return address is in the upper left.



Type equation here.







Postmarked September 13, 1935, this card mailed from the Vatican in Spanish to a doctor in Buenos Aires, it advertises the drug Novalgina (diperona) as a pain and fever reducer originally developed in 1922 as "Novalgin" by the German company Hoechst.



ROMA - Piazza S. Pietro, Basilica  
e Palazzi del Vaticano



Estimado doctor y fino amigo:  
Supongo en su poder  
mi tarjeta postal del Rhin.  
Como ve Ud., me encuentro  
ahora en Italia.

Italia es un país ma-  
ravilloso, con sus pintores-  
cos paisajes y sus magníficos  
tesoros artísticos, elocuentes  
testimonios de rancia cul-  
tura.

He tenido ocasión  
de librar de sus dolores  
reumáticos a numerosos  
enfermos. Los resultados  
han sido siempre inme-  
jorables.

Cordialmente suyo  
Novalgina

Señor  
Dr. [illegible]

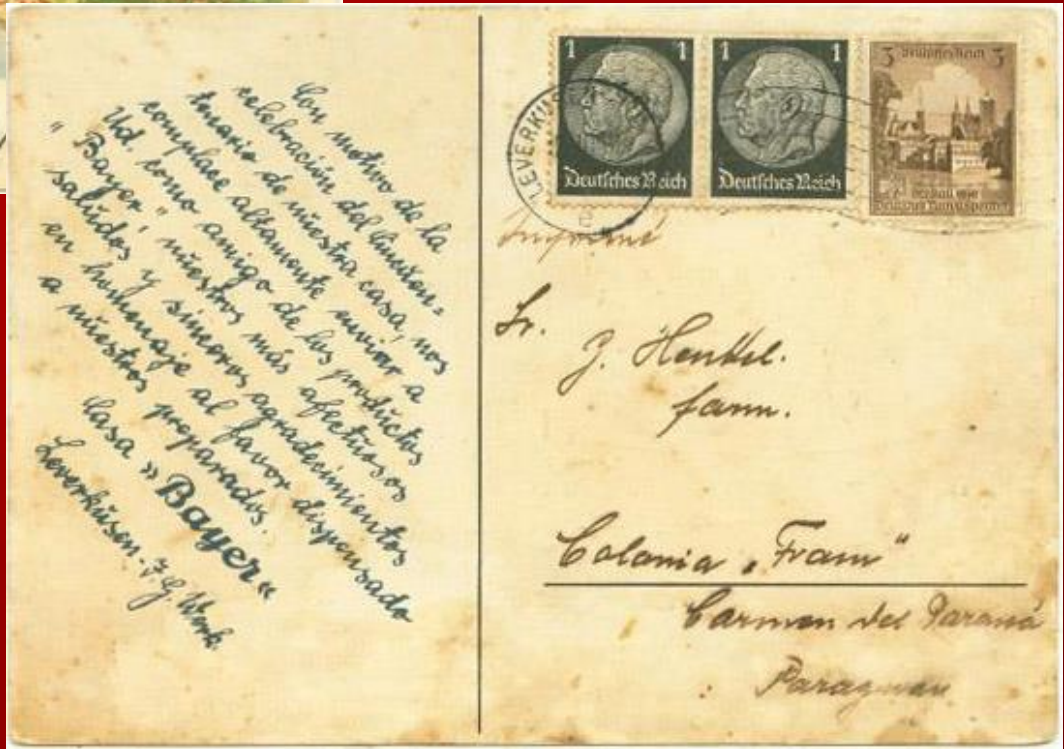
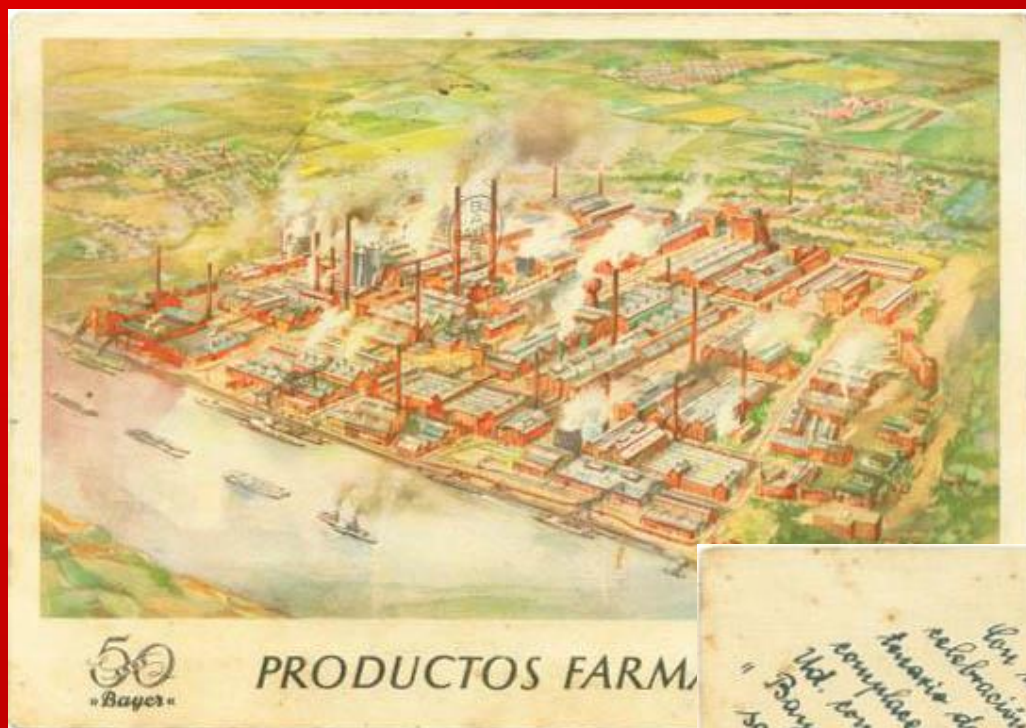
1935 - Stab. Fot. S. A. Crimella - Milano (VI-5)







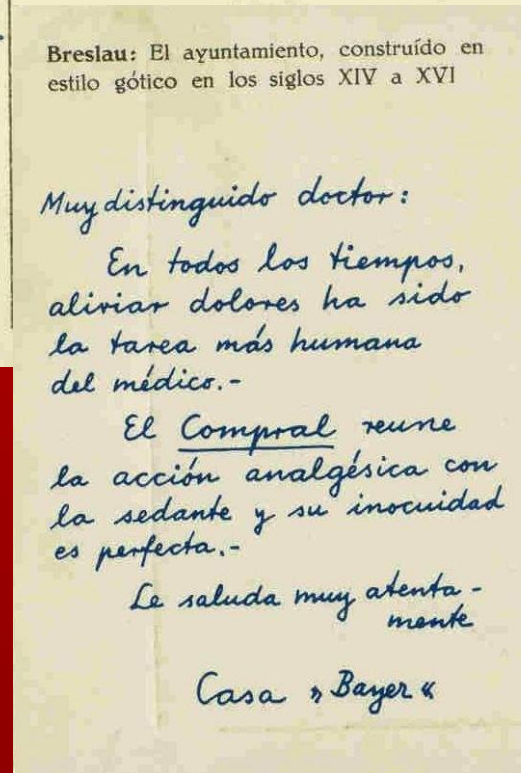
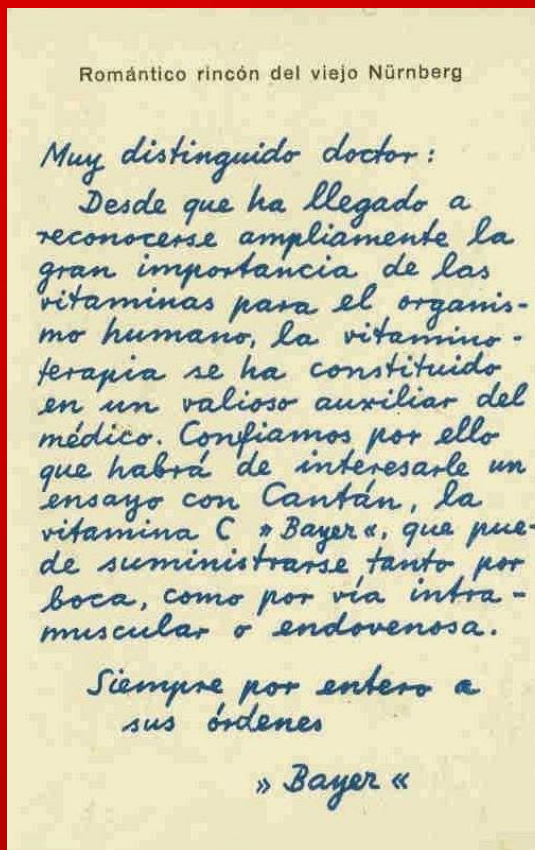
Everyone has heard of Germany's Bayer. 1937 marked the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Here's a card in Spanish mailed from the company's headquarters in Leverkusen to a doctor in Paraguay. It's main plant is depicted along the Rhine river.







Here are 2 of 4 known cards  
mailed in 1937 from  
headquarters in Leverkusen  
to doctors in Argentina. All  
depict historic sites of  
Germany, mailed on:  
Nuremberg- March 3  
Frankfurt- May 28  
Wurtzburg- June 25  
Breslau- September 13





Headquartered in Dieppe, France, famous for its healing mineral waters, Laboratoires La Biomarine produced Dear Doctor cards for many decades from 1947 to 1966 advertising three major drugs they produced, all with a sea-water base:

- > Marinol -calcium and phosphorus
- > Ionyl - phosphorus, manganese and magnesium
- > Plasmarine - calcium, phosphorus and manganese

This company took to postcard promotional campaigns like no other, relying on mail from exotic lands to capture the attention of French-speaking doctors in France and abroad.

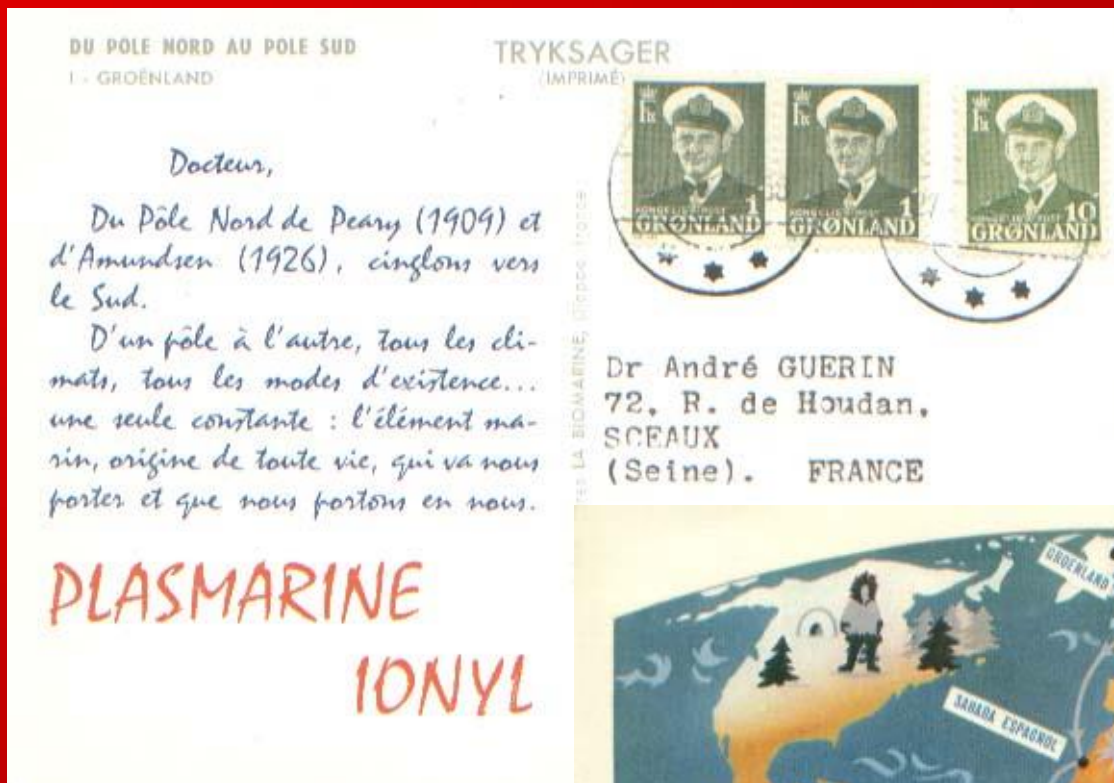


Catalog of La Biomarine postcard campaigns





Their advertising division, "Publimer," created mailings sent to doctors from 6 to 16 countries in various mini-tours, with starting and ending points, along with story lines that flowed from one stop to another.



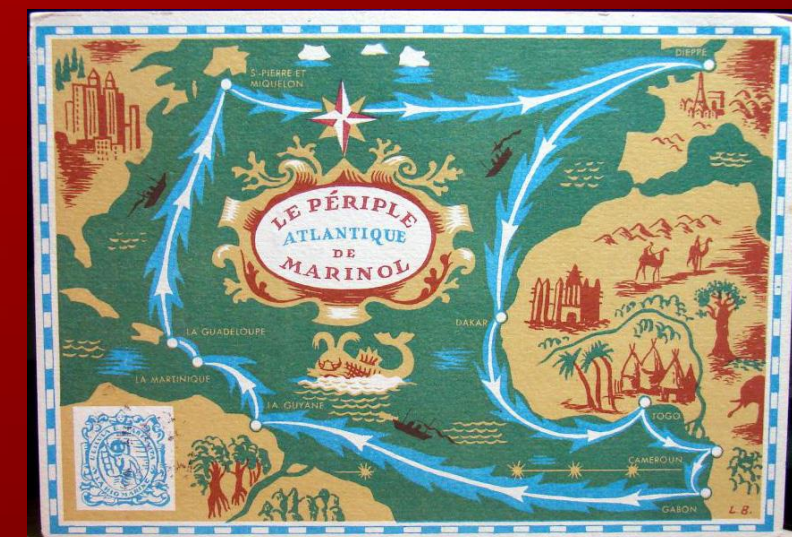
Tour 12 - North Pole to South Pole Tour:  
1958-1959 from  
Greenland to French  
Southern and Antarctic  
Territories







All of these “tours” started with Card #1 that was always a map showing the countries planned to be visited.







La Biomarine tours took pride in highlighting locales around the various French colonies and foreign possessions.

Philatelic or not, mail sent from the French military post of Fezzan in southwestern Libya is very rare.







Here in the U.S. collectors may be most familiar with “Dear Doctor” cards from Abbott Labs. Their numerous postcard mailing campaigns ran from 1956 to 1968. Over 193 face-different cards have been recorded to date, with a wealth of varieties in each type.



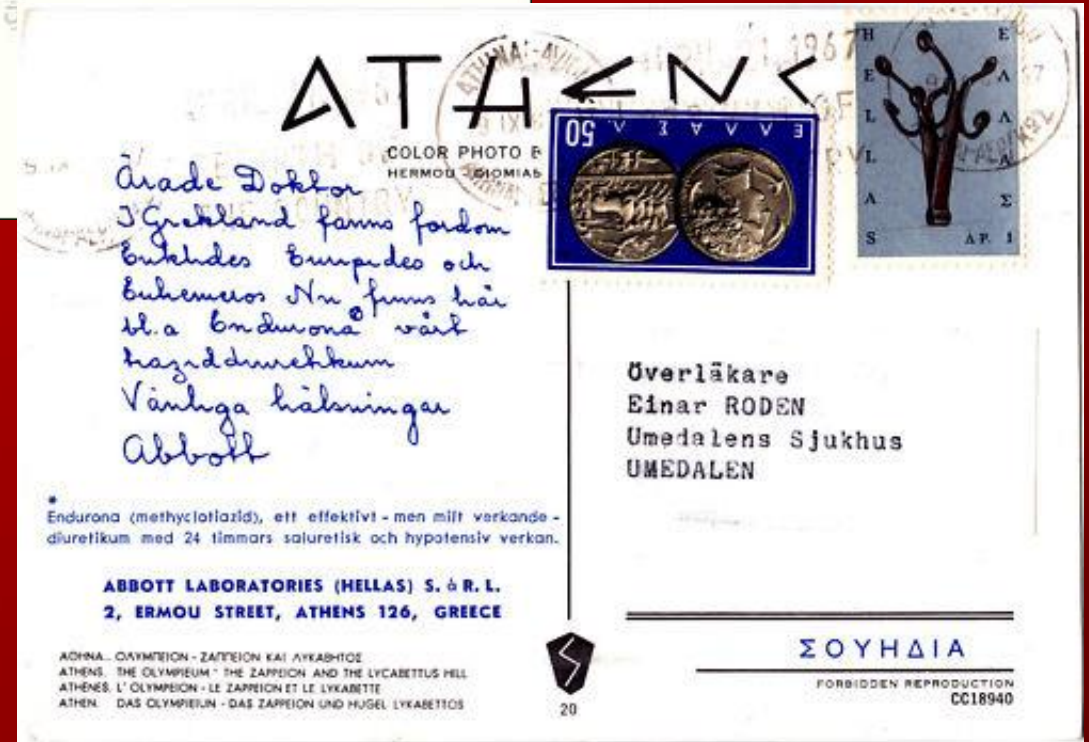




All card advertise only one of their many drugs—pentothal sodium—a fast acting intravenous anesthetic used primarily in operating rooms. It was invented in 1936 by an Abbott scientist, Ernest Volwiler, who later became president of the multi-national company.



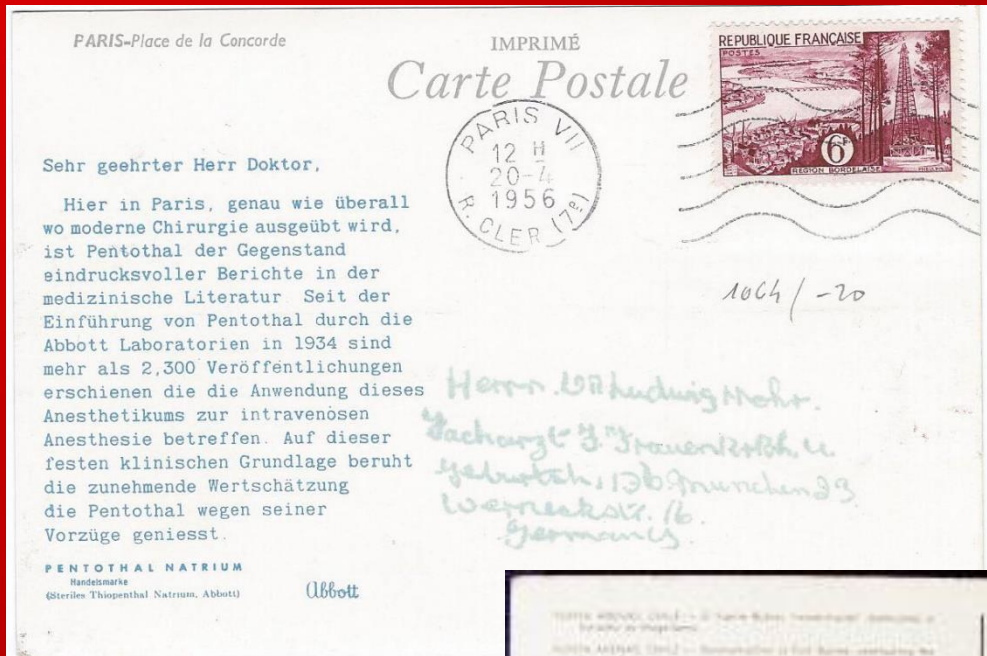
The trademarked drug was also know as “truth serum,” especially during the Cold War era and is typically misspelled, as in this Superman cartoon.





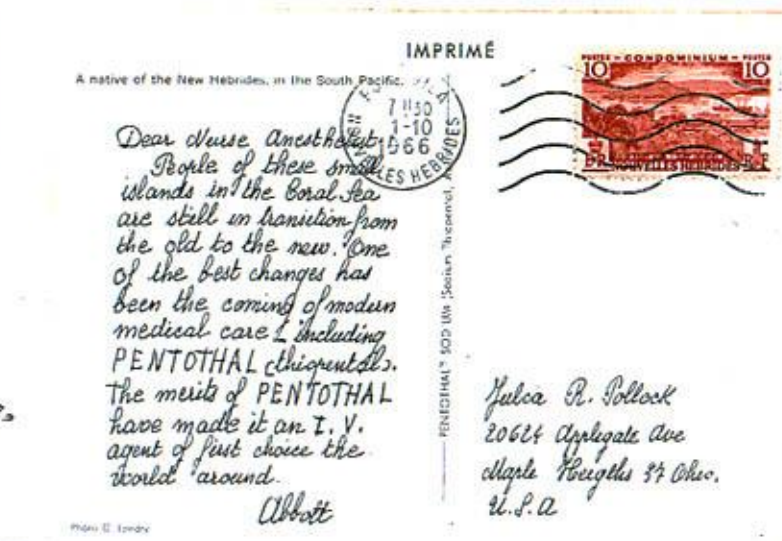
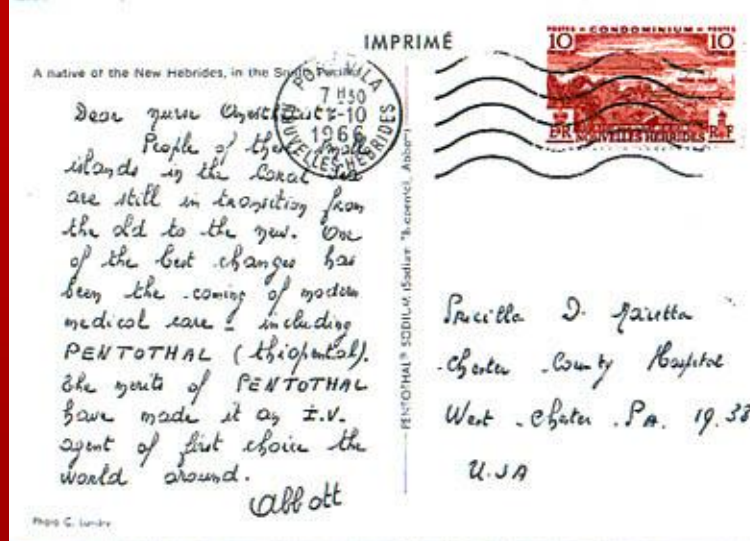
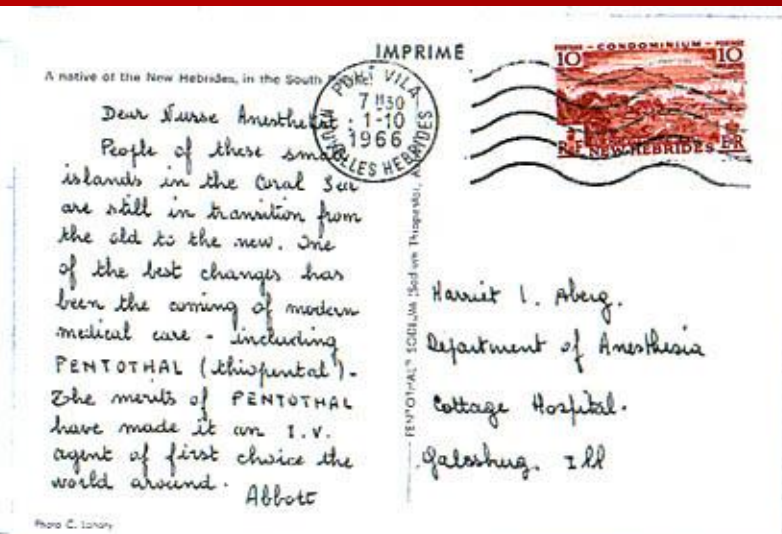
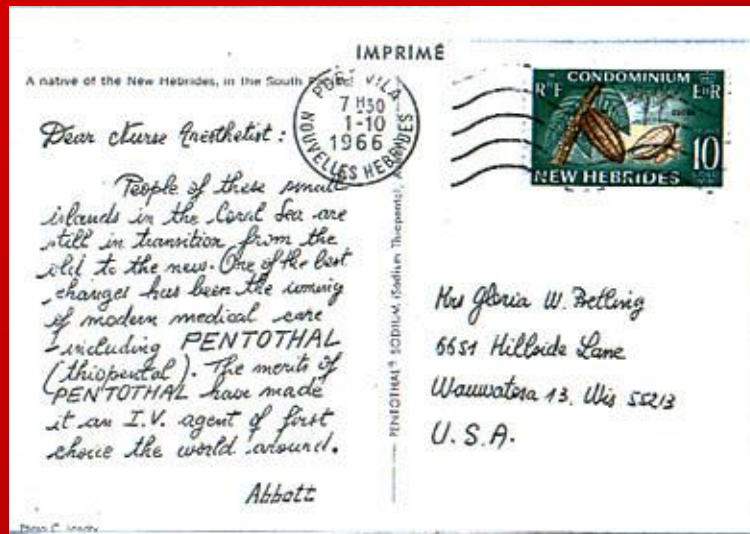


And sent to these 30 countries and territories: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belgian Congo, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Canal Zone, Chile, Cuba, France, Germany, Greece, Hawaii (pre-statehood), Hong Kong, Italy, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, USA





An interesting variety on some Abbott cards deals with the handwritten message itself. While the text is identical, the printed handwriting among cards can be different, as seen here in this 1966 mailing from the New Hebrides.







Some cards, especially those of the later series, are scarce and in high demand.



### Austria Abbott Lab Dear Doctor Card to Chicago #622A tied 1968 Lippizaner horses

Like Want Own

Item condition: --

Ended: Sep 27, 2012 14:40:48 PDT

Winning bid: **US \$297.99** [ 9 bids ]

Add to list

Shipping: **\$1.00** Standard Shipping | See details

Item location: Kentucky, United States

Ships to: Worldwide

Delivery: Estimated on or before **Tue. Oct. 02** to 14626

Payments: **PayPal** | See details

Returns: 14 days money back, buyer pays return shipping | Read details



### eBay Buyer Protection

Covers your purchase price plus original shipping.

Learn more

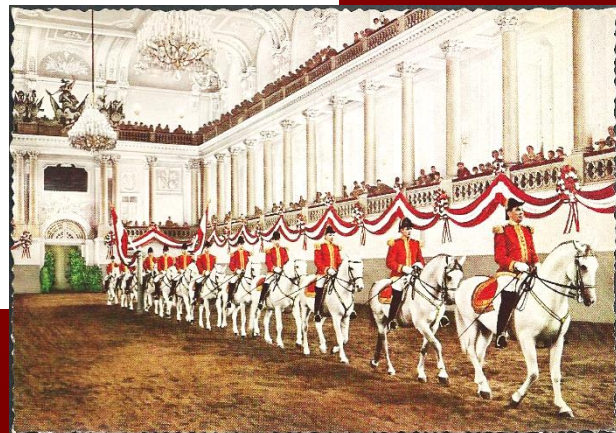
### Seller information

**mcmichiganinky** (8735) ☆

100% Positive feedback

Save this seller

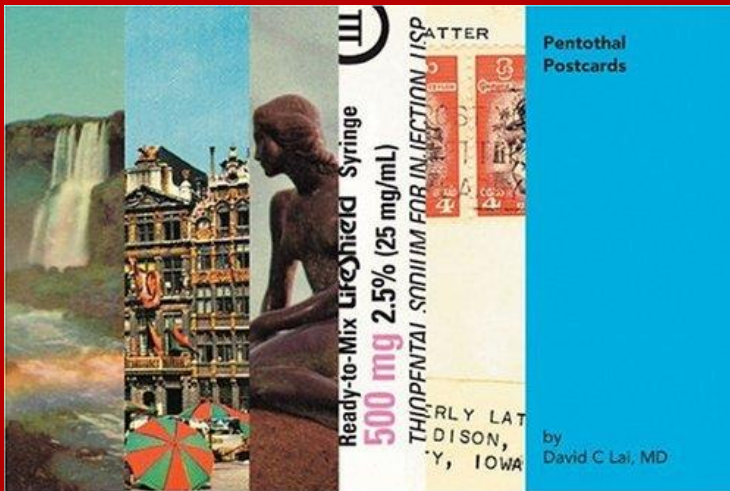
See other items







There are several resources for Abbott postcard collectors. An illustrated book provides images of the front and backs of many cards.



The Dear Doctor web site provides articles and an extensive checklist of all types of advertising cards, nearing 1,000 in all, including counts of each seen and reported.

**The "Dear Doctor"  
Postcard Collector Page**  
<http://www.deardoctorpostcards.com>

**Details about Abbott Labs'  
and other advertising  
campaigns using postcards  
from around the world.**

**by Tom Fortunato**

Sehr geehrter Herr Doktor:  
Yes, Pentothal is a favorite here in Switzerland, too -- adding to a worldwide acceptance unmatched in modern intravenous anesthesia. 2700 published reports -- and 23 years of use -- stand behind its present unchallenged position!

PENTOTHAL: SODIUM  
(Sodium Thio-pental Sodium; Abbott)

Abbott

Page 401, September, 1946

ORGANISATION HELVETIQUE  
27.10.46  
HELVETIA  
GENEVE

HOLLIS A. BENTON, M.D.  
1715 SANTA CLARA AVE.  
ALAMEDA, CALIF.  
U.S.A.

Jump to: [Basics](#) \*\*\* [Check Lists](#) \*\*\* [References](#) \*\*\* [Members](#) \*\*\* [Join Us/Report Findings](#) \*\*\* [Publications](#)





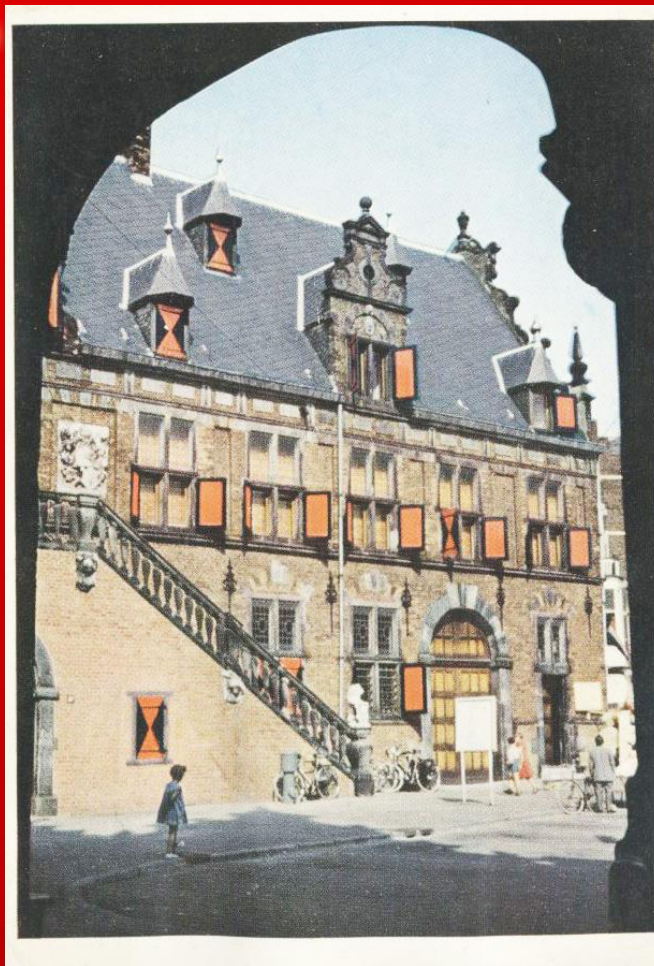


Remind yourself again that these advertising postcards were sent in a time before the Internet, email, and text messaging. Mail was the primary way to get information into the hands of a targeted audience, and several other drug companies used postcards through the decades in their advertising plans.





An antacid, rabro tablets were made by the company of the same name in the Netherlands. It's interesting to note that the Hong Kong agent for the firm was based in a garment factory!



### RABRO tablets

#### Indications :

ulcus ventriculi and duodeni, chronic and acute gastritis, gastric disturbances of nervous-vegetative origin.

#### Formula :

succus liquiritiae RABRO, bismuthi subnitras, magnesii carbonas levis, sodii bicarbonas, rhamni frangulae cortex, calami rhizoma.

#### Dose :

1 to 2 tablets thrice daily.

#### Advantages :

90 % favourable results, pains disappear quickly, ambulatory treatment, strict diet not necessary, no injurious side-effects.

Carlo Garment Factory,  
G.P.O. Box no. 5158,  
KOWLOON.

Photo number 7 out of series of 8.

Ra.K.E. 6. 59. 9400



Dr. LEAN Sick Keng,  
Alice Ho Miu Ling  
Nethersole Hospital,  
HONG KONG.

15404





Laboratoires  
Rolland-Hepatrol of  
Paris sent this card  
in 1969 about  
Activarol, an anti-  
fatigue liquid  
medicine of  
glycine, vitamin C  
and dried yeast.



*Cher Docteur,*

*l'action naturelle de  
l'ACTIVAROL vit. C rétablit  
l'équilibre physico-psychique  
et favorise le bonheur serein.*

*Salutations très distinguées.*

*Laboratoires  
Rolland-Hépatrol.*

vitamine C 2500 g  
sels d'acide ascorbique 2000 g  
glycine 2500 g  
extrait de levure de bière 2500 g  
extrait de levure de bière 2500 g  
extrait de levure de bière 2500 g

2500 g  
2000 g  
2500 g  
2500 g  
2500 g  
2500 g

10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml

10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml

10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml  
10 ml

LABORATOIRE DE L'HEPATROL - 4, rue Platon - Paris 15<sup>e</sup>  
Société d'Exploitation des LABORATOIRES ALBERT ROLLAND



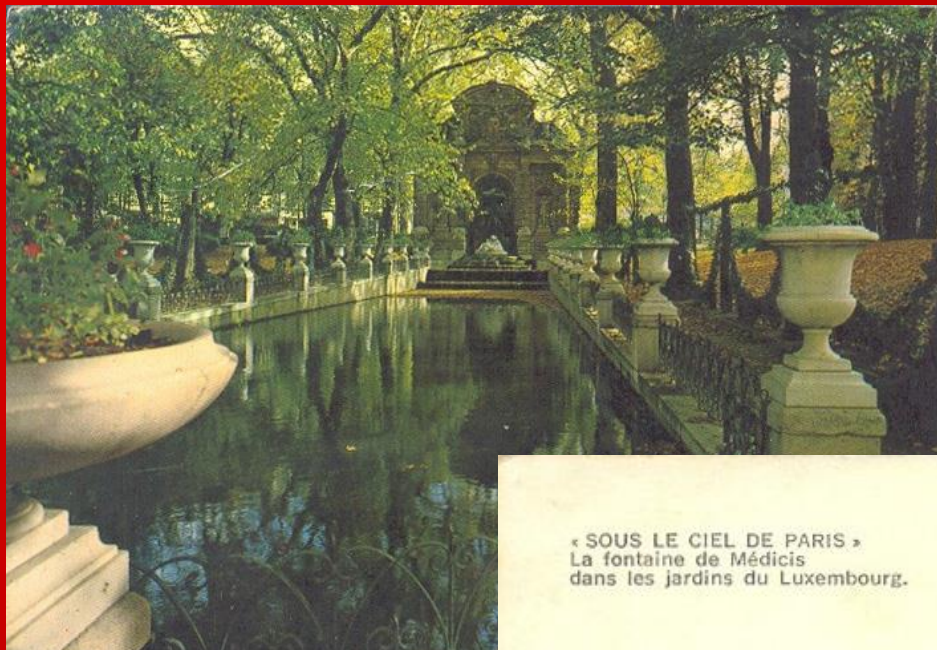
DOCTEUR C. PRUD'HOMME  
1252 BELANGER EST  
MONTREAL, P.Q.  
CANADA

PRINTED IN ITALY





Tranxilium is an anxiety drug, here in a postcard from its manufacturer, Clin-Byla in France, sent to a doctor in Argentina mentioning that country's local representative.



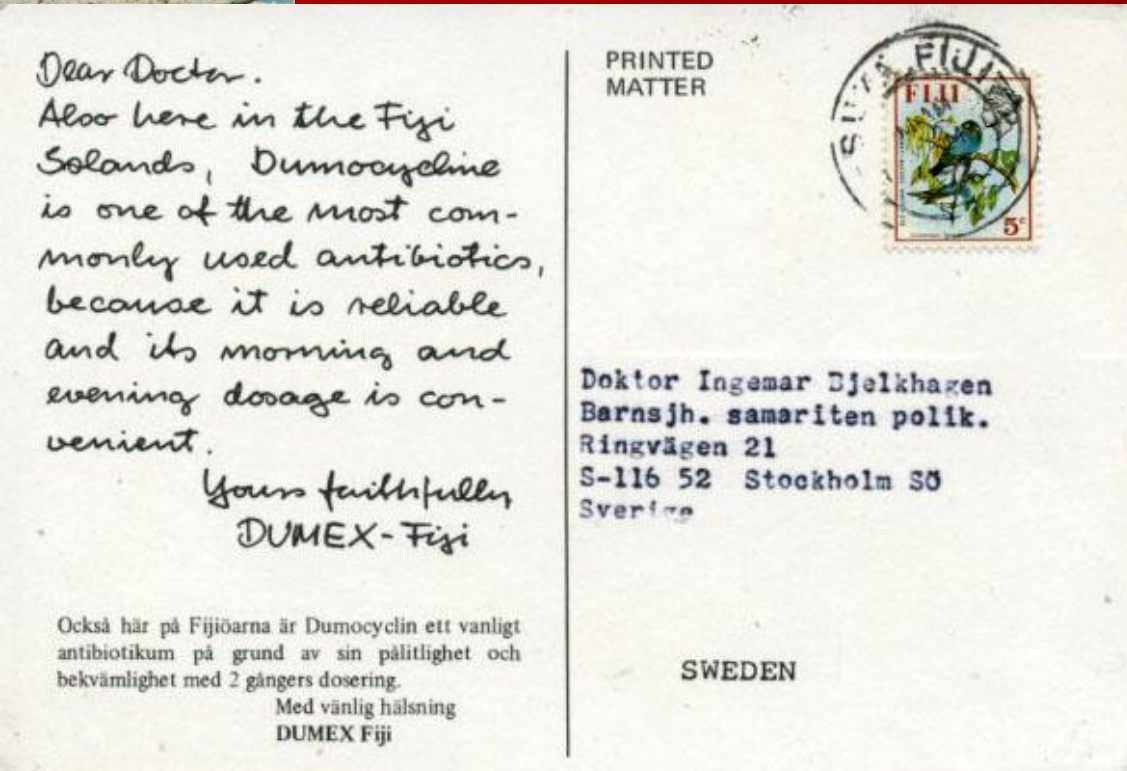




Between 1971 and 1972 Dumex created a series of postcards from exotic places. They tout Dumocycline, an antibiotic used to treat bacterial infections.



Most postcards found are known sent to doctors in Sweden. The native language of the country depicted was used in the upper text, with a Swedish note below.







Dyaresani,  
Dumex Ghana ye nnuvu ahorow pii  
wa yen nnuvyebea a ewo Nkran no mu,  
nanso nnuvu a boraso kasa mu wofre no  
Antibiotics node woye no wo aburokyiri.  
Yekra Dumocycline a ayaresafo pii  
anisyeho no fi Dumex Copenhagen.  
Ayaresafo phanan ne aduonum a  
ewo Ghana no nyinaa gye Dumocycline a  
agye din no to mu na nebo nso nnye  
den koraa.  
Eye yen,  
**DUMEX - Ghana**

PRINTED  
MATTER

Överläkaren  
Doktor Theodor Schönberg  
Sjukhuset  
S-880 50 Backe  
Varize

**SVEDEN**

Den tillverkning av läkemedel som Dumex har vid fabriken i Accra omfattar inte antibiotika. Dumocyclin, som används i stor utsträckning, importerar därför från Dumex i Köpenhamn. Dumocyclins popularitet bland Ghanas 450 läkare bygger på den säkra effekten och det förnuftiga priset.  
Med vänlig hälsning  
**DUMEX - Ghana**

Tuan Dokter jlt.,  
Selat satu pabrik obat-obatan Dumex yang terbah didirikan (th. 1969), telah didaerah industri yang baru pada jarak 30 km dari Djakarta. Di antara hasil produksinya, termasuk Dumocycline, suatu hasil sbrangkin yang telah memperoleh ketunduhan yang kuat ditelam pasaran kaum pribumi yang dapat dipergajai dan peggunaan yang mudat serta halangnya yang pantas.  
  
Hamas kami,  
Damon - Indonesia

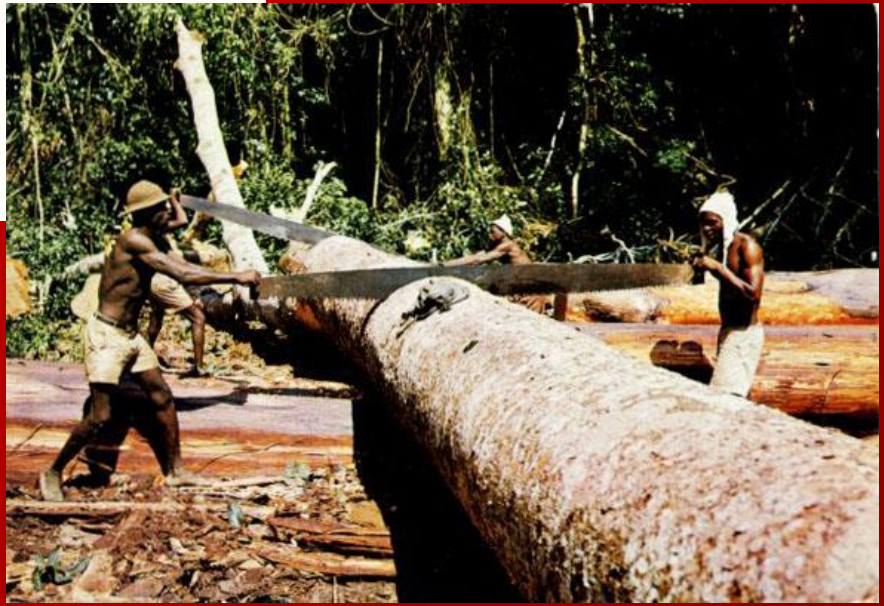
PRINTED

Dumex Läkemedel AB  
Pack  
S-250 03 Helsingborg 3  
Sverige

**SVEDEN**

Dumex' nyaeste läkemedelsfabrik (uppförd 1969) är placerad i ett nytt industricentrum 30 km från Djakarta. Tillverkningen omfattar bl.a. DUMOCYCLIN, som uppnått en stark position som ett pålitligt och bekvämt tetracyklinpreparat - till ett rimligt pris.  
Med vänlig hälsning  
**DUMEX - Indonesien**

Ghana to Sweden



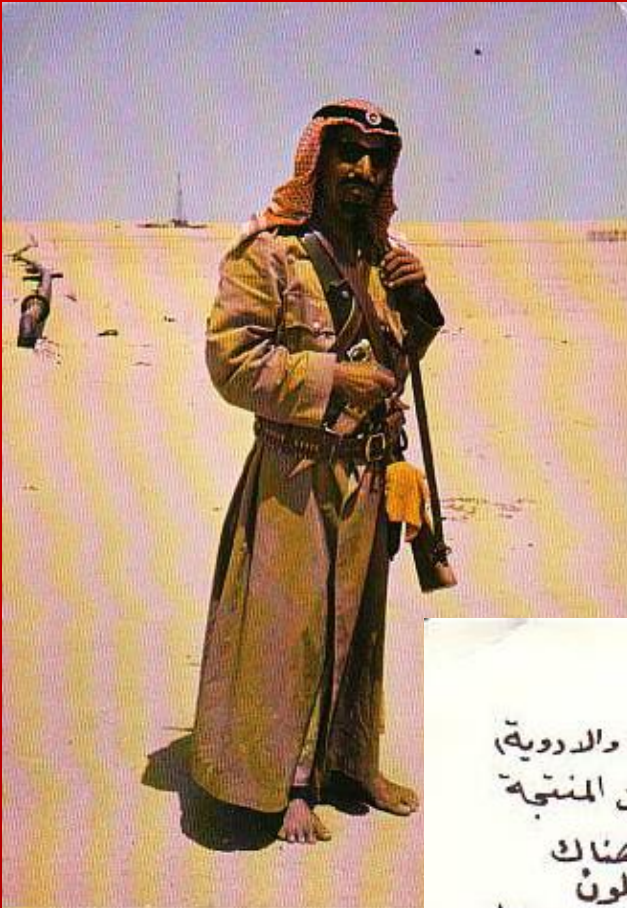
Indonesia to Sweden



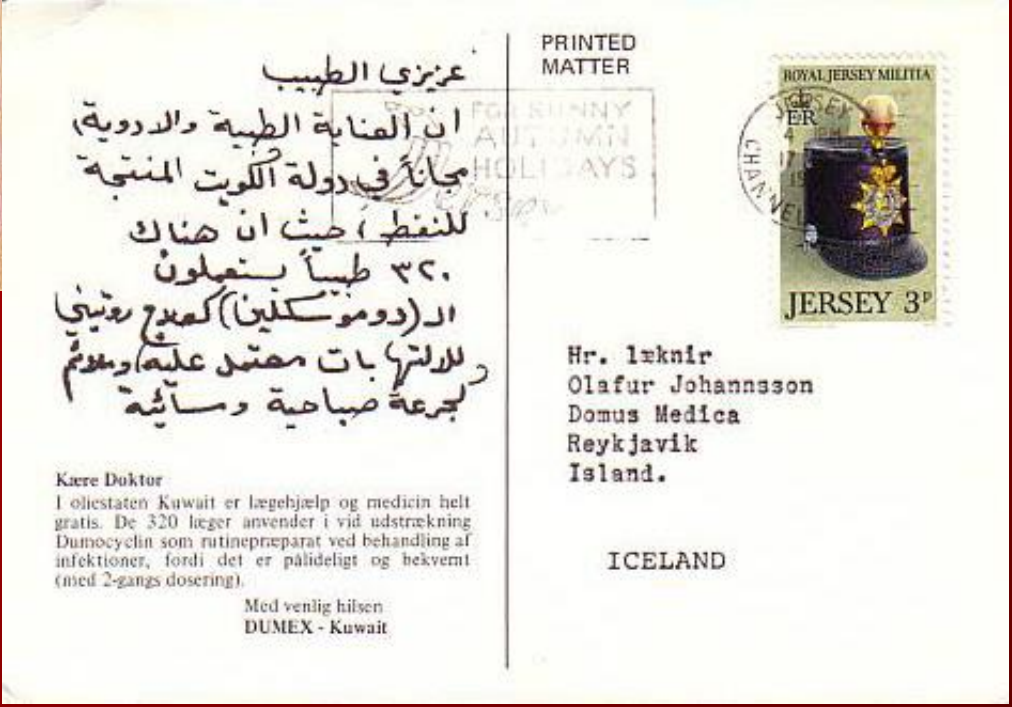




Ethiopia to Sweden



Also note the lower text is in Swedish, not Icelandic.



Jersey to Iceland

It's not known why this card depicting a Kuwaiti native was mailed from Jersey, Channel Islands instead.

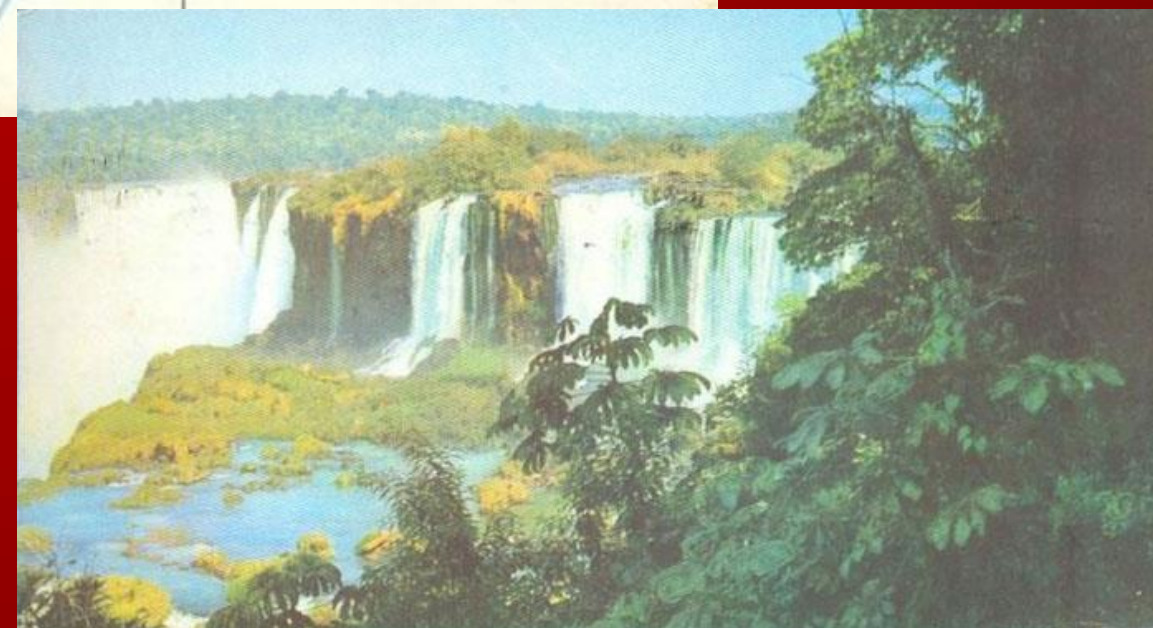




The Netherlands pharmaceutical firm Organon mailed a series of postcards from its Argentine division to doctors in that country in 1973. They advertised docabolin, a hypotension medication.



Iguazu Falls, Argentina



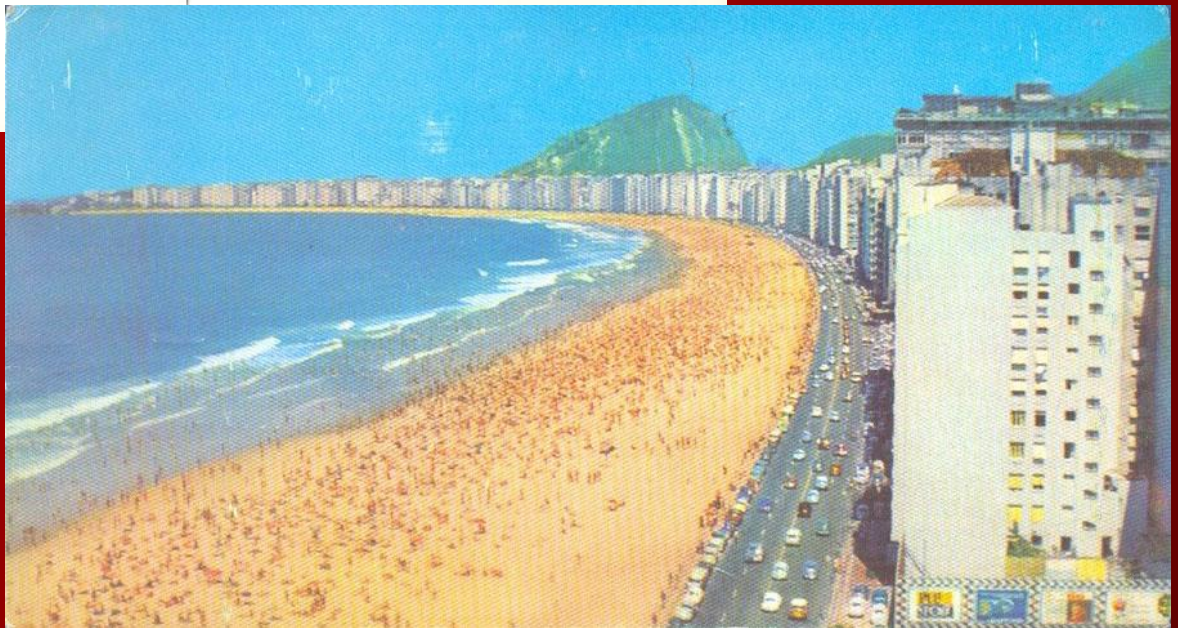




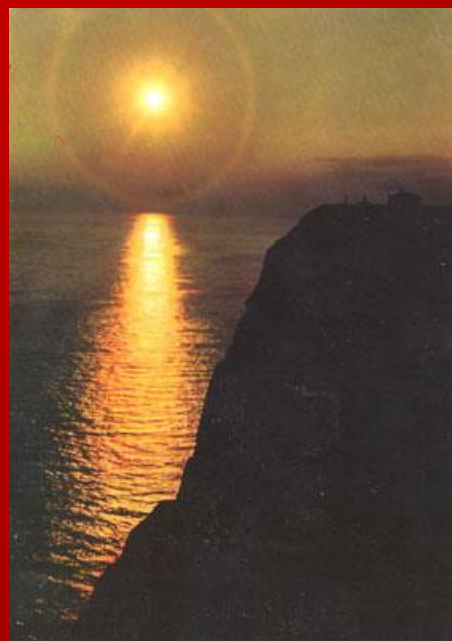
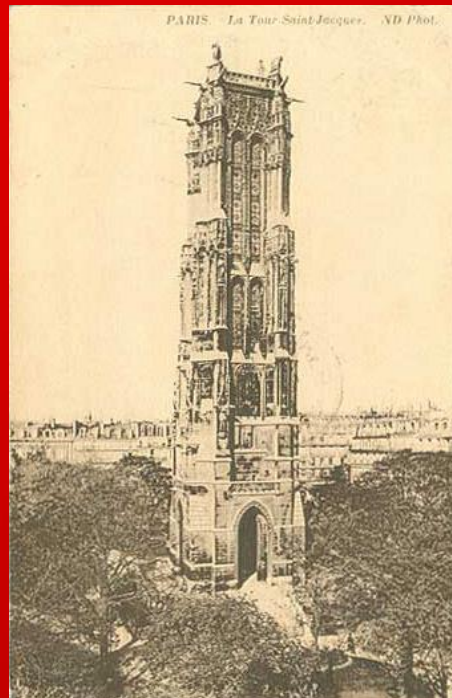
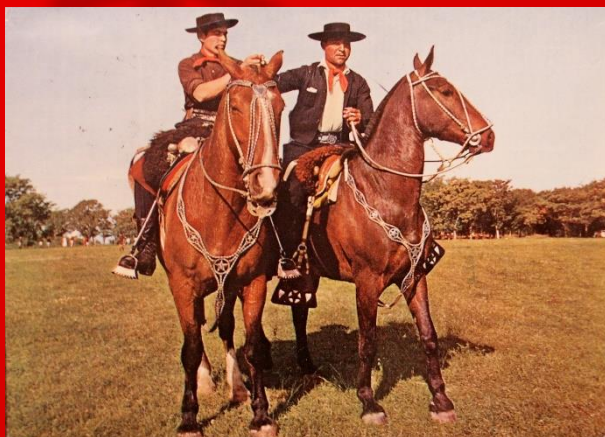
Interesting that this postcard depicts a neighbor's famous attraction but was mailed domestically instead of from Brazil.



Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil







I hope you've enjoyed this brief introduction to Dear Doctor postcards.

This just touches the surface of the subject. Additional presentations will be made dealing with Abbott Lab postcard varieties and errors, domestic postcard drug advertising campaigns, and non-drug postcard mailing series.

Check out my site for more information:

<http://www.deardoctorpostcards.com>